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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, April 6, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "VACUUM CLEANING NOTES." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Just by way of celebrating the season when all good housewives once had to go through that fearful ordeal known as "spring cleaning," let's dedicate today to talking about vacuum cleaning. For the vacuum cleaner is largely responsible for the passing of the dust cap and the carpet beater and the annual household upheaval that made the men want to leave home and wore the women to a frazzle on many a bright spring day.

Though vacuum cleaners have been in use in many homes for years, listeners are still asking questions about how to get the best service from them. Recently at several State experiment stations investigations of vacuum cleaning have been in progress. Evelyn Roberts at the Washington Station and Gail Redfield at the Indiana Station are among those who have made such studies.

One question that housewives often ask is: "How fast should the machine move over the rug for most thorough cleaning?"

Evelyn Roberts found that the machines she tested all took up the most dirt when they moved at a speed of a foot and a quarter per second. Gail Redfield suggests pushing the machine back and forth at a speed of one to two feet per second. She also advises adjusting the nozzle of the machine so that it is about an eighth of an inch from the rug. Otherwise the machine will not take up dirt most efficiently.

Perhaps most important of all for efficient cleaning is a clean dust bag on the machine. Miss Roberts goes so far as to advise emptying the dirt from the bag after each cleaning, and brushing the bag both inside and out once or twice a month. Miss Redfield agrees that as the dirt gathers in the bag, the machine does a poorer and poorer job of cleaning. She suggests that a bag with a smooth inside surface has great advantages because it is so easy to keep clean.

What about washing the bag occasionally? "Never, never," say both these investigators. Brush the bag but never wash it because washing removes the special finish on the fabric that makes the bag dustproof.

Another point to remember. Pins, broken glass, tacks or other sharp metal pieces may poke holes in the dust bag or chip the fan blades. So take care not to let the machine pick them up.

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Housewives often inquire whether vacuum cleaners wear out rugs. They even ask whether letting the rug get very dirty before cleaning is not better than too much cleaning. Miss Roberts and Miss Redfield both say: "No." Grit and dirt cause much more damage to rugs than cleaning. Sharp particles of dirt embedded in the rug and then ground in by the feet that walk over it eventually wear through or cut the fibers. So frequent cleaning protects the rug from this kind of wear. In any case, the wear from the cleaner is very slight compared to the wear from actual use. Certainly it is not nearly so hard on the rug as old-fashioned strenuous beating and brushing.

After a new rug has its first few cleanings, you may find a good deal of loose wool in the bag and worry for fear the machine is wearing it out. But this shedding is natural in a new rug, Miss Roberts finds. She explains that in making the rug, the surface is sheared off or the loops cut and much of this loose nap is left in the fabric. So you can expect 4 to 6 times as much nap in the vacuum cleaner bag during the first month of cleaning as afterward.

Now here are 4 suggestions from Miss Redfield about caring for your cleaner to make it last long and give best service. First, if the machine has a brush, keep the brush free of hair and threads. They interfere with its cleaning action. Store the machine in a clean dry place to keep it away from dirt, rust, and insects. (Carpet beetles and clothes moths have been known to eat both the bristles and the felt from cleaning machines.) Oil the machine regularly with a light grade oil, according to the directions that come with the machine. Now, if the motor gives off sparks, the cause is probably worn brushes. So put in new brushes at once before the motor is damaged.

There, listeners -- there are some hints from two State experiment stations to help you with your 1938 spring cleaning as well as your everyday cleaning at every season of the year. Let's just review briefly the chief points these 2 State investigators report for best use of a vacuum cleaner -- any make cleaner. Keep both bag and brushes clean. Run the machine at a speed of from 1 to 2 feet a second. Adjust the nozzle of the machine so that it is no more than an eighth of an inch from the pile of the rug. Don't pick up pins, tacks or other sharp objects with the cleaner. Oil the machine regularly with light-grade oil. Replace worn brushes before they cause damage to the motor.

Now to answer one last question: How much does it cost to own and operate a vacuum cleaner? That depends on the electric rates in your community, the wattage of your machine, how much you use it, and how much you paid for it. Operation costs are low for all machines, Miss Roberts finds. If the wattage of your cleaner happens to be 490 for example, and your electric rate is 3 cents per kilowatt-hour, and if you use the machine an hour a week, the cost of running it will be not quite 10 cents a month. The cost of both owning and operating a cleaner of average price would be about 50 cents a month.
